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TITLE: Sub-Culturally Competent HIV Prevention Case Management on the Mexican American Border

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ISSUE: HIV prevention case management services (PCMS) with the homeless subculture on the border means taking care of crises in clients' lives while integrating safer sex practices and safer needle use into their lives. Food, shelter, clothing, employment are more necessary to the client population comprised of the mentally ill, illegal immigrants, sex workers, drug users, drug dealers, gays, and lesbians, former inmates and each person's partner of the moment.

SETTING: El Paso, TX, is the largest city on the Mexican-American border. It is the destination and gateway to illegal, undocumented immigrants from all of Latin America. It is also a major illegal drug gateway. PCMS is located in the large homeless shelter in El Paso and this shelter serves the undocumented immigrants as well as US citizens who do not have identification.

PROJECT: PCMS has integrated itself into the lives of the shelter's clients by concentrating on survival needs first: (1) PCMS tailors its holistic approach to the problems of homelessness compounded with being HIV+, an intravenous drug user, a noninjecting drug user, a sex worker or a partner of the moment. (2) Clients are used as the experts to determine how to educate their cohorts; they select subjects to be presented in groups and help with recruiting. (3) The holistic approach of PCMS includes providing referrals for housing, food banks, medical and/or mental treatment, GEB classes and other classes. PCMS also serves family members whose crises may contribute to the clients' drug use or unsafe sex practices.

RESULTS: Two clinics have been located to give free Pap smears to undocumented women: HIV+ clients have learned that HIV can be lived with and are using the logistics aspect of PCMS and its networking with the community as well as the individual therapy to handle the stresses that accompany HIV.

LESSONS LEARNED: Go with the flow, not our way but the client's way.

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